CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

8 August 1963

SUBJECT: CHINESE COMMUNIST CAPABILITIES FOR ATTACKING INDIA THROUGH BURMESE TERRITORY

THE PROBLEM

To assess the maximum military force the Chinese Communists could employ and logistically support in sustained attacks into northeast India through Burma. The attacks considered in this paper are those the Chinese Communists have the theoretical capability to mount in addition to those described in [redacted] Estimate of the 25X1X7 "Chinese Communist Ground Threat Against India from Tibet and Sinkiang," dated 14 August 1963, and "[redacted] Estimate of the 25X1X7 Communist Chinese Air Threat Against India," dated 17 January 1963.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Although this study does not estimate the reactions of the Burmese government to a Chinese Communist incursion, it is assumed that the Chinese would, as a normal military precaution, deploy security forces along their lines of communication.

[redacted]

GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic downgrading and declassification

2. The Chinese would not augment ground and air forces along China's borders with countries in southeast Asia.

3. The Chinese would use port and rail facilities in North Vietnam.

CONCLUSIONS

A. In an attack on India through Burma we believe that the Chinese Communist would establish stockpiles on the Sino-Burmese frontier in the Hsin-chieh/Teng-chung area using Kunming as their base of supply. Kunming is served by a rail line from Hanoi in North Vietnam and by road from the Chinese railhead at Anshun, and these facilities could support limited operations in the China-Burma-India theater. The Chinese could use two principal routes to move supplies through Burma: (a) the Ledo Road via Myitkyina and (b) the Lashio-Mandalay-Imphal road. (Paras. 1-2)

B. After essential road improvements the Chinese could move a total of 840 tons per day to support ground operations in India. We estimate that the maximum ground force the Chinese could deploy in an attack into India through Burma would be about 132,500 men, equivalent to approximately nine infantry divisions under the command

of an army headquarters. The most favorable period for operations in the area occurs after the beginning of the dry season in November. (Paras. 3-8)

C. We estimate the force advancing over the Ledo Road would consist of one standard infantry division, four light infantry divisions, and one artillery regiment. The attack, we believe, would have the objective of destroying Indian forces, the seizure of the Digboi oil fields and the eventual link-up with Chinese forces advancing from Tibet into the eastern part of the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA). We estimate the force advancing through Imphal would consist of the major elements of two light infantry divisions and one standard infantry division. This attack, we believe, would have the objective of destroying Indian forces and, together with the attacks from Tibet, the occupation of important areas of northeast India. (Paras. 7-10)

D. We estimate the Chinese could also support four independent infantry regiments, two north of Homalin and two through the Dipu pass. These units would be supplied by pack animals and porters, and could be supported up to 50 miles into India. If air supply were available, they could penetrate deeper. (Paras. 11-12)

E. We believe the Chinese would employ about 395 combat aircraft in operations against northeast India. This force would probably consist of 300 MIG-15/17 jet fighters, 75 IL-28 light jet bombers, and 20 TU-2 light piston bombers. We estimate that these aircraft would provide a daily sortie rate of about 360. Approximately 120 transport aircraft would be available to support operations from Burma. (Paras. 14-18)

F. We believe that the Chinese have the purely military resources -- personnel, equipment, weapons, and ammunitiion -- to conduct operations through Burma and simultaneously attack along the Himalayan front. If such operations were undertaken, logistic support would require approximately 25 percent (50,000) of the nation's truck park and, on an annual basis, more than 50 percent (750,000)tons) of the motor gasoline available in all of China in 1962. It would necessitate a drastic reallocation of the nation's transportation and POL resources, and the Chinese would be confronted with extremely formidable maintenance and replacement problems. (Paras. 19-21)

G. We believe that the Chinese could launch attacks from Tibet and Sinkiang with little or no warning. We believe the attack through Burma, on the other hand, would give Indian defenses several

weeks of warning. Even if the Chinese could do the road rebuilding surreptitiously or under the guise of some peaceful purpose, the attacking columns would require approximately two weeks to close in their attack positions at the Indo-Burma border, and probably would be quickly detected. (Para. 22)

H. The foregoing conclusions relate to the maximum feasible scale of attack across Burma against India, entailing maximum logistic difficulties and warning time. A fortiori, the Chinese could attack in less force with less difficulty and less warning.

DISCUSSION

I. GROUND OPERATIONS

Logistics

1. The theater of operations for a Chinese Communist offensive against India through Burma encompasses Yunnan Province in China, northern Burma, and the states of Assam, Nagaland, and Manipur in northeast India. The Chinese would probably locate their base depot at Kunming which is served by road from the railhead at Anshun and by rail via Hanoi and Haiphong in North Vietnam. Forward stockpiles most likely would be established in the Hsin-chieh and Teng-chung areas.

2. Supplies for Chinese ground forces engaged in operations in India would have to be moved over distances ranging from 800 to 1,700 miles from Kunming. The initial transportation leg would cover the route by rail between Kunming and Ipinglang, and then by road to Hsinchieh, which is near the Sino-Burmese border some 330 miles west of Kunming. From Hsin-chieh the Chinese could move supplies across Burma to the Indo-Burmese border via the following main supply routes: (a) over the Ledo Road via Myitkyina, and (b) over the Burma Road to Mandalay and thence by way of the Mandalay-Imphal road. Some supplies could also be delivered to Mandalay via the route through Talo and Keng Tung. Available intelligence indicates that extensive road repairs and bridging to the Shingbwiyang-Pangsau Pass section of the Ledo Road and on parts of the Mandalay-Imphal road would be required before these logistic routes could support the scale of military operations envisaged. (See map at Annex.)

3. The limiting factor governing Chinese attacks on India from Burma would be the amount of supplies which could be moved across the Indo-Burmese frontier. We estimate that the Chinese could move a daily maximum of about 1,330 tons forward from the stockpiles at Hsin-chieh and Teng-chung. This tonnage, we believe, would be used as follows: 70 tons for engineer units, 220 tons for

motor transport, 840 tons to support ground operations in India, and 200 tons for air units in Burma.

Composition of the Attacking Forces

4. We estimate that the composition of the Chinese Communist force could include an army headquarters to provide operational control along the axes of advance, lightly equipped infantry divisions for the initial phase across the mountainous jungle terrain along the Indo-Burmese border, and an operational reserve consisting of standard infantry divisions, with their organic medium artillery and some tanks, to be employed on the Assam plain. These ground units could readily be provided from the two armies located in the Kunming Military Region, supplemented as necesaary from China's strategic ground reserve.

Operational Considerations

5. Prior to the iniation of the attack, these troops probably would be staged in Chinese territory near the Sino-Burmese border. Forward movement from the staging areas would have to await necessary road repairs. We believe that essential improvement of the Ledo Road would require the eployment

of six engineer regiments and take up to one month. Three engineer regiments would probably be sufficient to make the necessary improvements to and maintain the Mandalay-Imphal road. After essential road repair, it is estimated that the attack forces could close in their attack positions at the Indo-Burma border in approximately two weeks.

6. An offensive during the southwest monsoon (May-September) would be extremely difficult, but not impossible, to support logistically. The most favorable period for military operations in the area occurs after the beginning of the dry season in November. Refer to Annex D for a detailed discussion of the climatic effects on ground and air operations.

Avenues of Attack

7. We estimate that the Chinese would utilize two major and two cross country avenues of advance into northeast India. One major avenue leads from Pangsau Pass through Ledo and across the Digboi oil fields to Dibrugarh; the other is via Imphal, Kohima, and into Gauhati. Cross country trails lead from Bhamo via Indaw and Homalin to the Indo-Burmese frontier and from Kun-s han in Chamdo district through the Diphu pass to Walong in Eastern Assam.

8. In simultaneous advances over the two principal avenues of attack into India, the Chinese could employ and logistically support a force estimated at 118,500 troops, organized into approximately eight infantry divisions under the command of an army headquarters.1/ Tables of personnel and equipment for the army headquarters and for the standard infantry division are shown in Annexes B and C, respctively. Over the two cross country trails, the Chinese could support four independent infantry regiments (14,000 troops).

9. Along the northern axis leading to Dibrugarh (via the Ledo Road) the Chinese force could consist of one standard infantry division and four light infantry divisions with one additonal artillery regiment (74,000 troops). Chinese objectives in this attack, we believe, would be the destruction of Indian Army forces, the seizure of the Digboi oil fields, and the eventual link-up with Chinese operations from Tibet into the eastern part of the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA).2/

1/ The daily through-put capacities of the Ledo Road and the Mandalay-Imphal route required to support this force are 520 tons and 320 tons, respectively.
2/ "[redacted] Estimate of the Chinese Communist Ground Threat Against India from Tibet and Sinkiang," dated 14 August 1963.

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[redacted]

10. In the advance towards western Assam (via the Mandalay-Imphal route) the Chinese could employ the major elements of two light infantry divisions and one standard infantry division (44,500 troops). This attack and the attacks from Tibet would probably have the objective of destroying Indian forces and the occupation of important areas of northeast India.

11. To assist forces attacking on the Imphal route and from Tibet in ght Rima area, the Chinese could support pack animal and porter supplied units from roadheads at Homalin in Burma and Kun-shan in China. Approximately 50 tons would be available at each place to support two infantry regiments 30-50 miles north of Homalin, and an additional two regiments from Hun-shan through the Diphu Pass to the Walong area. These units could penetrate deeper if air supply was available.

12. In addition, by using surplus tonnage available on the Ledo Road at Shingbwiyang and at Myitkyina, the Chinese could support small parties of lightly equipped infantry operating on the Indian frontier north of Putao and west of Shingbwiyang. We have no intelligence on the tracks and trails in these areas but from World War II experience we believe this is possible. It is considered that the employment of these additional troops, the number of which cannot be accurately estimated, would not materially affect the Chinese capability to achieve their overall objectives in Assam.

II. AIR OPERATIONS

25X1X7

13. In the "[redacted] Estimate of the Communist Chinese Air Threat Against India," dated 17 January 1963, 290 tactical aircraft were estimated as constituting the air threat. Of this number, we believe 100 aircraft would be based in Sinkiang for operations against the Ladakh-Jammu-Kashmir area, and 190 would be based in Tibet and southwest China for operations against northeast India. In support of operations through Burma we believe an additional 205 tactical aircraft could be employed against northeastern India. The 395 aircraft which could operate against India's eastern front would probably consist of 300 MIG-15/17s (including 40 MIG-17D limited all-weather aircraft), 75 IL-28s, and 20 TU-2s. Locations of all aircraft are indentified in Annexes E and F, and logitic requirements for this force are noted at Annex G.

14. There are 19 airfields within China and 12 within northern Burma which could be used for the employment of Chinese Communist air forces in support of attacks against northeast India. Because of operational and logistic factors we believe only six of the former and two of the latter would be used for combat support of these attacks. We believe that logistic capabilities are sufficient to support two fighter regiments at Myitkyina South and one fighter

regiment at Namponmao. A program of improving existing forward airfields in Burma and the use of airfields that may be captured in India would permit continuing forward deployment of fighter/ground attack aircraft to the immediate vicinity of the active battle area.

15. Jets based at Myitkyina South and Namponmao would be the only fighters that could be employed in a ground attack role. From these two based in Burma, the fighters could provide close support to ground forces generally within an area embracing Imphal, Dibrugarh, and Sadiya in India (see map at Annex). The TU-2 aircraft, in attacks from Nagchhu Dzong airfield in Tibet, could also provide support to ground forces as far south as Imphal. The IL-28s would have the range to conduct bombing attacks and reconnaissance over northeast India and jet fighters on combat air patrol could cover all of India east of East Pakistan and Nepal.

16. It is estimated that these Chinese Communist aircraft would provide a daily sortie rate of about 360. A likely mixture for this number of sorties would be 65 ground support and 225 air defense/combat air patrol sorties by jet fighters, with the jet light bombers conducting 55 sorites per day, and the piston light bombers conducting 15 sorties per day.

17. We believe that approximately 120 light and small transport aircraft could be utilized in supporting operations through Burma. The 30 IL-12s, 16 IL-14s, and 28 C-46s of the Thirteenth Air Division could deliver about 132 tons of material daily from the Chengtu area to the airfields at Myitkyina South and Namponmao as long as airborne operations were not conducted elsewhere. In addition, 7 LI-2s and 3 C-47s of the Thirteenth Air Division could operate from Kunming or Mandalay and 35 AN-2s could be located in Burma as follows: 10 at Singkaling Hkamti South, 10 at Kolemya, and 15 at Katha. The AN-2s would have the primary mission of supporting the ground forces.

III. THE EFFECT OF BURMA OPERATIONS ON CHINESE COMMUNIST MILITARY CAPABILITIES FROM TIBET AND SINKIANG

25X1X7

18. In the "[redacted] Estimate of the Chinese Communist Ground Threat Against India from Tibet and Sinkiang," dated 14 August 1963, we estimated that to sustain the operations described in that study for one year would require about 40,000 trucks, and approximately 600,000 tons of motor gasoline. We then made the following judgment: "An effort of this size probably could not be supported if China were involved in significant military activity elsewhere."

19. We believe that the Chinese have the purely military resources -- personnel, equipment, weapons, and ammunition -- to conduct operations through Burma and simultaneously attack along the Himalayan front. However, the attack through Burma would require approximately 10,000 trucks and, on an annual basis, nearly 150,000 tons of motor gasoline. This, if the Chinese were to launch attacks simultaneously into India from Tibet, Sinkiang and Burma, approximately 25 percent (50,000) of the nation's truck park would have to be used, and, on an annual basis, more than 50 percent (750,000 tons) of the motor gasoline available in all of China in 1962 would be consumed.

20. Although the Chinese could, if they wished, make available the motor transport and gasoline required to support these offensives, to do so would necessitate a drastic reallocation of the nation's transportation and POL resources. Motor and air transport would have to be redistributed from other military regions and the civilian economy would be stripped of all but a minimal level of these modes of transportation. Many organizational and managerial problems would arise, and it is questionable whether the military or civilian transportation agencies could cope with these problems. Furthermore, if this transportation effort, which would be taking place over extremely long and difficult roads and in areas far remote from industrial bases, were to continue for long,

the Chinese would be confronted by extremely formidable maintenance and replacement problems.

21. We believe that the Chinese could launch attacks from Tibet and Sinkiang with little or no warning. We believe the attack through Burma, on the other hand, would give Indian defenses several weeks of warning. Even if the Chinese could rebuild the roads surreptitiously or under the guise of some peaceful purpose, the attacking columns would require two weeks to close in their attack positions on the Indo-Burma border and would probably be quickly detected.

Annex A

DAILY RESUPPLY REQUIREMENTS FOR SELECTED CHINESE COMMUNIST ARMY UNITS
(Short Tons Based On "Light Combat Rates" At 85% TOE)

Unit	Class I (Rations)	Class II and IV (General Supplies)	Class III (POL)	Class V (Ammunition)	TOTAL (All Clas
Army Hq (Including Command & Staff and Combat Support Elements)	5.2	4.7	9.9	0.6	20.3
Inf Div (Standard)	24.6	22.3	28.0	54.0	128.9
Inf Div (Light)	23.6	21.5	3.1	28.0	76.2